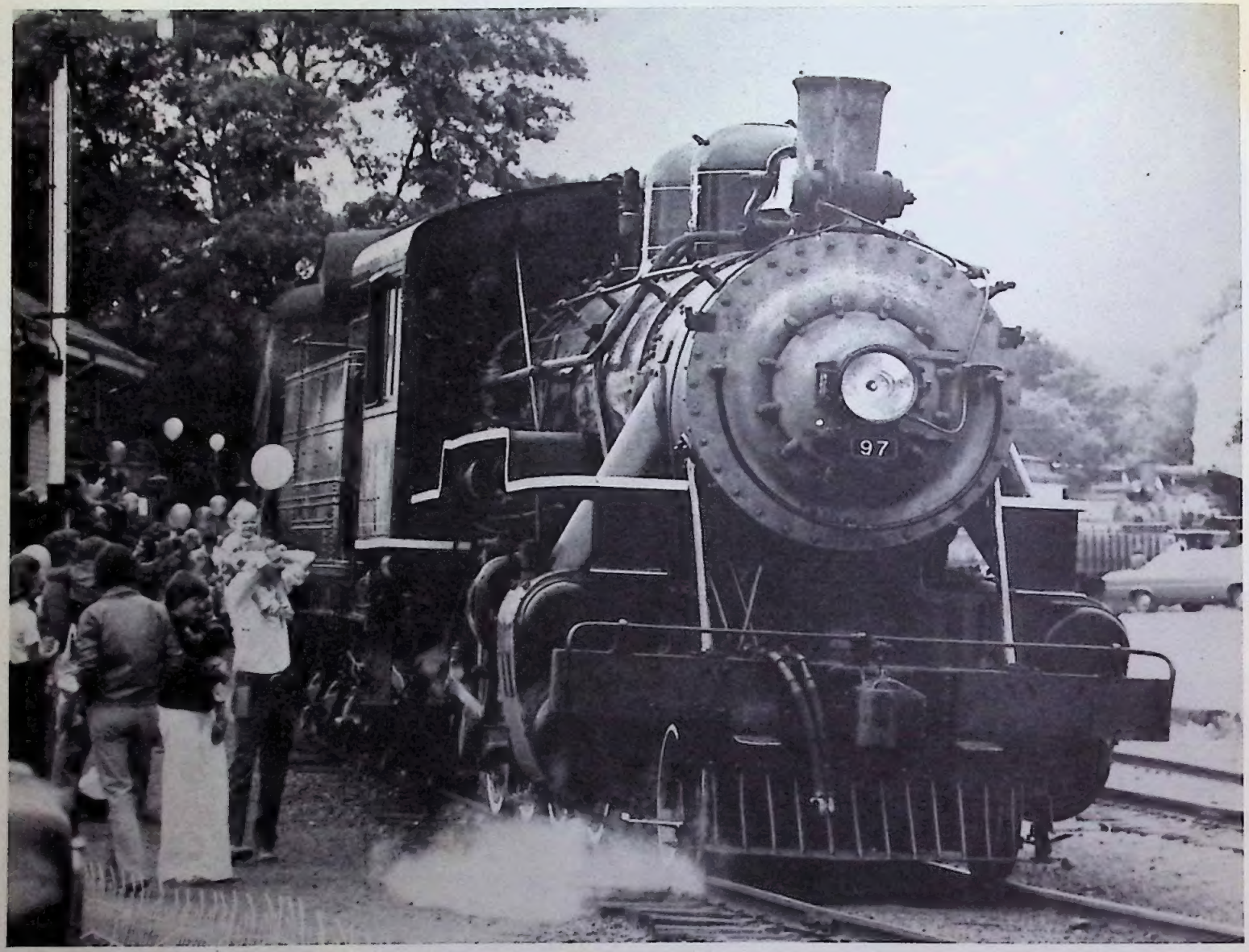
The VALLEY RAILROAD STORY

THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY LINE

By
TOM NELLIGAN



As passengers begin to gather, Valley Railroad engine 97 prepares to lead another train from Essex to Chester. *(Tom Nelligan)*

This short history of the Valley Railroad Company was in large part made possible by some of the people who have been involved with the VRR since its inception. Accordingly, I'd like to thank VRR Chairman Oliver Jensen for his Introduction and his editorial assistance, VRR Track Foreman Max R. Miller for roster information and use of many of the photos from his vast collection chronicling the Connecticut Valley Line, Connecticut Valley Railroad Museum President Michael J. Robinson Jr. for additional graphic material, and longtime VRR trainman William D. Sample, whose history of the early days of the Valley Railroad was a valuable reference. Thanks also to Howard Pincus, Jim Shaughnessy, and all the rest of the photographers whose names appear with the pictures in this volume.

— Tom Nelligan, 5/83

COVER

Engines 97 and 40 lead a Railfan's Day doubleheader across the Essex meadow on October 4, 1980. *(Carl H. Sturner)*

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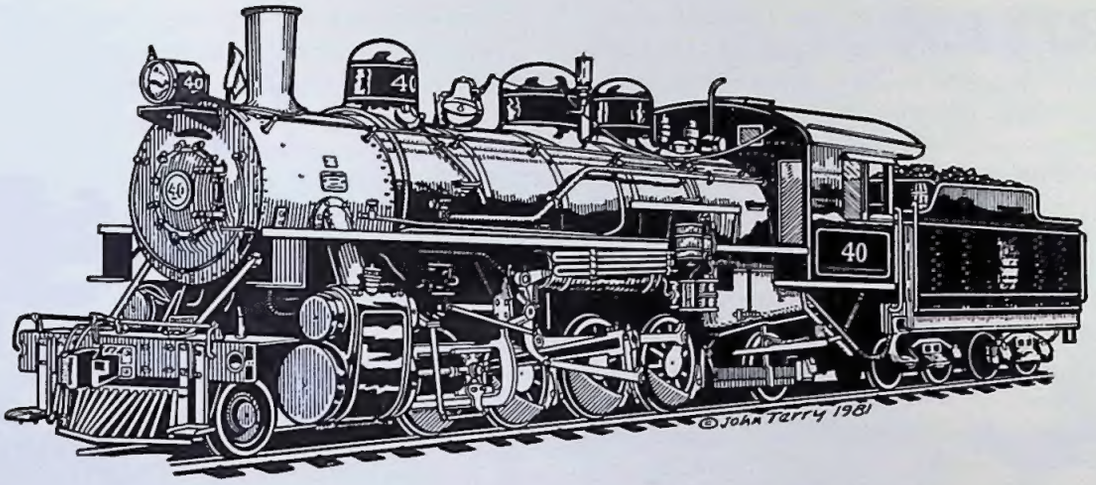
The Valley Railroad Company
The Connecticut Valley Line

97 / 60

As the steam locomotive quietly simmers and passengers await the imminent departure, the engineer and conductor confer while the station agent looks on. It is a near-perfect recreation of 1920's branchline railroading in New England, found today on the Valley Railroad. *(Howard Pincus)*



INTRODUCTION

The Valley Railroad has two histories. The first begins with its creation in the days after the Civil War, when steamboats ruled the Connecticut River, when railroads were opening the West, and when Ulysses S. Grant was President, and the age of the robber barons was at its height. The second history begins a century later with its resurrection and the running, on July 29, 1971, of the revived railroad's first passenger train — one hundred years to the day after the first one chugged ceremoniously north from Saybrook on the shore of Long Island Sound up the River to Hartford. There were difficulties on each occasion, as there always are in the romantic enterprise of railroading: In 1871 there were pauses to finish short stretches of track and saw off pieces of stations that hung out too near the track; in 1971 barely dry seat frames were still being installed as the first train rolled into Essex to the crash of band music.

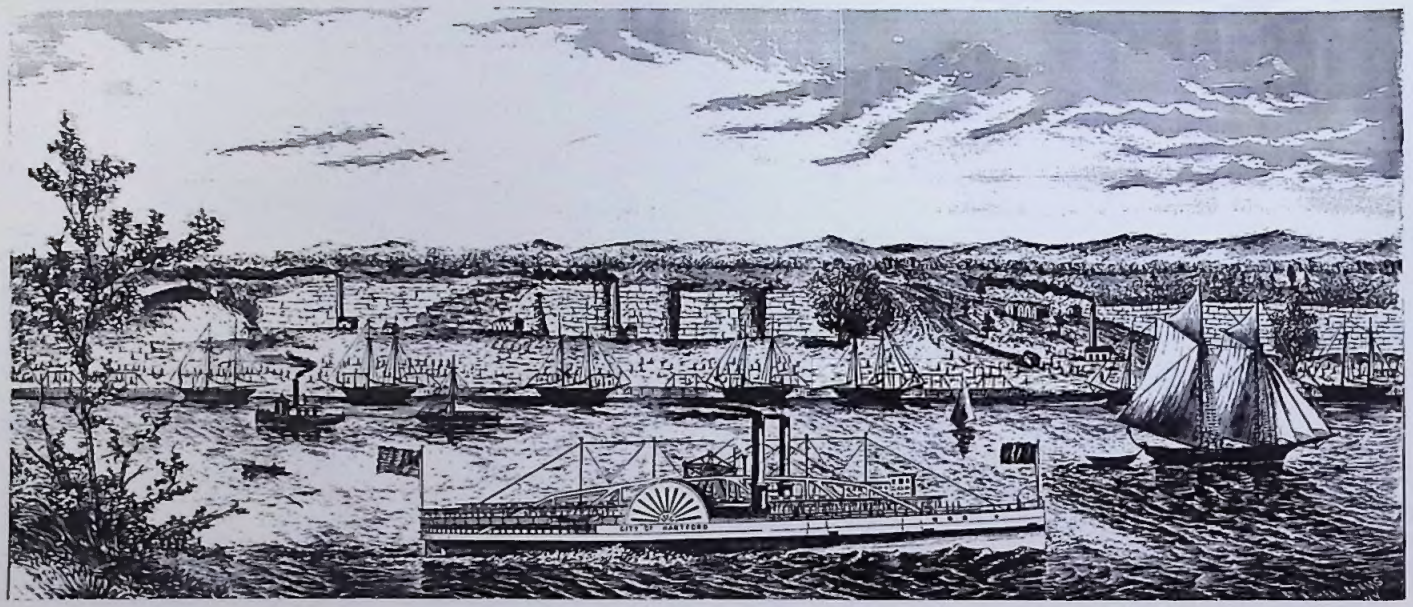
In its early days, the Valley line was a highly marginal part of the biggest business in America, which was 19th and early 20th century railroading. Then as now the Connecticut River was sparsely settled, with too few passengers and too little freight for a railway to prosper. Today, of course, this former handicap has turned into an advantage, since the unspoiled villages and unmarred waterscapes provide a matchless historical backdrop for our old-fashioned steam trains and river boats. Here, where time has stood relatively still, we are creating again, in the form of an operating museum, aspects of this country as it looked in 1910 and 1920.

Historical authenticity is one of our main goals, and the coaches, the parlor car, the steam engines, and so much else to be seen here are the real thing — last relics snatched from the scrap dealers and lovingly restored on the property by staff members and volunteers who have mastered lost arts. It is an expensive business, with large maintenance problems, but the ambitions of the company and our associated volunteer museum look forward hopefully to more buildings, more restored cars, and further extensions of our track to the north, to Haddam and beyond (perhaps to Middletown!). The associated riverboat company, the Deep River Navigation Company, dreams of a real steamboat. The future is, of course, shrouded from us, but what has happened so far, thanks to the public and a few generous donors, is astonishing enough.

It is good to have Tom Nelligan's history; his credentials as a railroad historian are impressive, and this little book, brief as it must be, is a matter of deep satisfaction to all the many people who have helped make this project work and set the steam whistle echoing its magic, mournful sound once again down the River valley.

Oliver Jensen,
Chairman

THE RIVER



Before there was a Valley Railroad, there was the valley and the river that carved it. The Connecticut River flows from the top of New England at the Quebec border to the region's southern edge at Long Island Sound, a four-hundred-mile course. For as long as people have inhabited the area around Essex, the river has been a central force in their lives and in their history.

In geological terms, the Connecticut is a newcomer to the neighborhood. The original channel of the river, formed as a rift valley when the primordial continents split apart around 250 million years ago, took it straight south from what is now the area of Hartford to New Haven, where it emptied into the ocean through New Haven harbor. There was no Long Island until the glaciers, much later, dropped it there, and thus no Long Island Sound. Many millions of years later the land that is now Connecticut sank and was completely covered by the Atlantic. When it rose again, 75 to 100 million years ago, the state had a southeasterly tilt, and the river found the easiest route to the sea to be through a new channel — its present path through Middletown and Essex to Old Saybrook. As a result of this change of course, one of the narrowest parts of the Connecticut Valley is found near its mouth, whereas in most river systems the valley is widest near the outlet.

The first humans to live in the lower valley were Indians who moved in as the glaciers of the last ice age receeded some 10,000 years ago. In their language the river would become "Quinnehtukqut" — the "long tidal river" — and they would live along its banks, fishing and farming, for thousands of years.

The first European to record a visit to the lower valley was the Dutch explorer Adriaen Block. He and his crew sailed up the river as far as Enfield in 1614 in a ship called the *Onrust*, which no doubt startled the native population with its size, sails, and strangely-dressed, light-skinned crew. Colonization followed, with the Dutch establishing a fort called House of Hope just south of the site of Hartford as well. Anglicized, the Indian name "Quinnehtukqut" became Connecticut which was formally organized as a royal colony in 1639. The Puritan settlers drew up a document called the Fundamental Orders that is hailed as the world's first written "constitution" establishing a representative, if only mildly democratic government

The alluvial soil of the valley was less hostile to farming than the rest of rocky New England, and soon farms flourished in the growing Connecticut Colony. There was also a living to be made from the river itself, which was so full of fish that shad could be used for fertilizer and salmon were considered regular food for servants. Within a few years Connecticut was exporting corn, tobacco, and salted fish to neighboring Massachusetts, and to the West Indies and Europe too.

The river was never friendly to large vessels, as the meeting of river currents and Long Island Sound tides created a permanent sand bar at its mouth. Once a boat got by the Saybrook bar, ever-changing channel shoals made upriver navigation difficult. Nevertheless a prolific shipbuilding industry that specialized in shallow-draft river sloops developed long the lower valley. There little vessels, often sailed by just a two-man crew, ranged as far as the Carribean to trade valley farm products for rum and other exotic delights. When commerce required bigger ships, the yards at Essex, Haddam, and the other towns turned

to brigs and schooners — craft that could sail downriver only at times of high water. By the middle of the eighteenth century there were over seventy locally-owned vessels working the lower Connecticut.

The lower valley was out of the main line of action during America's early wars, but Essex did generate footnotes to the histories of both the Revolution and the War of 1812. In the first argument with England, an Essex shipyard produced the colonies' first locally-built warship, the 24-gun *Oliver Cromwell*. A generation later, the British got their revenge when they sailed into Essex chasing privateers. They spared the town but burned 23 docked boats.

The nineteenth century saw the greatest development of river navigation. Dredging and channel-marking work made the Connecticut accessible to larger vessels, at least as far as Hartford. Steam power came to the river in 1815, when the ancestral steamboat *Fulton* smoked and chugged up to Hartford, thoroughly impressing all who saw it. In spite of occasional boiler explosions and other mishaps, steamboats soon replaced sailing craft as the preferred mode of transportation. The first of the big Connecticut River steamboats was the *Oliver Ellsworth*, An 112-foot, 230-ton sidewheeler launched in 1824 that was capable of carrying up to 400 passengers. The elegantly appointed vessel made three trips a week between Hartford and New York, the 140-mile run taking 18 hours if tides and currents were favorable. The fare was $5, which at the time was a good week's pay for a working man.

By the mid-1840's, Hartford's twenty wharves were accomodating 2,000 arrivals and departures each year. Although the first primitive "rail roads" were beginning to make their mark on the state — the Hartford & New Haven Rail Road was completed between those cities at the end of 1839 — river traffic would continue to increase in the years up to the Civil War. Even after railroads had been built along the Connecticut shore and up the valley, steamboats held onto a loyal clientele that preferred a more leisurely and traditional form of transportation. Aquatic passenger service between Hartford and New York lasted until 1931, although in its last years it was operated by a subsidiary of the omnipresent New Haven Railroad. Some cargo traffic, primarily fuel oil, remains on the river to this day.

Connecticut industrialized during the nineteenth century, and became one of the most densely populated states in the country, but by and large the lower valley saw little additional development. The shifting sandbar at the river's mouth had fortunately prevented Old Saybrook from ever being the sort of major seaport that New Haven and New London had become. Because the lower valley's topography lacked the sort of waterfalls that had brought water power and hence mill development to such upper valley towns as Holyoke, Turners Falls, and Bellows Falls, none of the quiet villages of the lower Connecticut Valley ever became big factory towns.

Amazingly, the lower valley made it to the twentieth century much as it had always been. Hartford is a major city, of course, and Middletown has grown too, but between Middletown and the sea, the Connecticut's shores are still primarily rural. There are points along the shore where the view of the river and hills includes no signs of modern development, points where the valley looks from railroad windows exactly as it did to Adriaen Block over three centuries ago. There was a time in the recent past when the water was somewhat polluted, but now an increased environmental consciousness has led to considerable improvement. The shad still run each spring, and even the Atlantic salmon are coming back undisturbed by the thousands of pleasure boats and the occasional commercial barge that preserve the 350-year tradition of Connecticut River navigation.

The people along the shore have changed, but in the lower valley the river is a constant.

The 19th century etching at the top of the opposite page depicts sailing activity on the Connecticut River at its best. Schooners are lined up at the Portland brownstone quarries while the sidewheeler "City of Hartford" and assorted other craft glide by. At right, the railroad had intruded into the picture by the time an artist was commisioned to record the Maplewood Music Seminary for Ladies at East Haddam.
(Both illustrations, Oliver Jensen Collection)

VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORY

On a bright summer day around the turn of the century, a southbound NYNH&H freight swung around the curve into Essex behind a classic high-wheeled 4-4-0 locomotive. The train is crossing today's Railroad Ave., Route 602. *(CVRM collection)*

By the middle of the nineteenth century the steam train had become America's most important form of freight and passenger transportation, and no town could hope to grow or prosper without a railroad connection to the outside world. The villages of the Connecticut Valley owed their existence to the river and the boats that sailed it, but the boats were about to lose their business to faster and more versatile competition. The tracks that became today's Valley Railroad were part of a network of rails that eventually reached virtually every town in New England.

Railroad construction in New England began in the 1830's as the first tentative lines reached out from Boston. The first serious suggestion for a railroad along the lower valley came in 1852, when a company called the Hartford & Middlesex County was chartered to build south from the state capitol. The H&MC failed to obtain adequate funding, and the proposal quietly foundered. Sixteen years later, though, the idea was revived, and this time the rail proponents had the cash to carry out their plans. A group of businessmen headed by James C. Walkeley, the president of the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company, obtained a state charter on July 17, 1868. The new Connecticut Valley Railroad was to be built from Hartford down the west shore of the river to the village of Saybrook on Long Island Sound.

During the remainder of 1868 and into 1869 survey crews mapped out the right-of-way for the new line, closely following the riverbank for much of the route. The topography of the valley lent itself to railroad building, as no tunnels or major bridges would be required as the tracks followed the base of the hills that lined the river. In 1870 actual construction began, and by the summer of 1871 the line was completed from Hartford to Saybrook Point, 1.8 miles south of the present Old Saybrook station. The first ceremonial train over the 45-mile Connecticut Valley Railroad ran on July 29, 1871, and consisted of an engine, a baggage car, and four coaches. The dignitaries' ride from Saybrook Point to Hartford took 6½ hours, largely because the official party had to pause north of Middletown while a hundred-foot section of track that had been overlooked by construction crews was bolted into place. Another problem beset the return trip: the southbound special had to stop suddenly near Haddam when it was discovered that an earth cut had partially collapsed since morning, piling two feet of soil over a hundred feet of track. Once this was cleared the official party finally made it back to Saybrook Point at midnight.

A regular train began running along the Connecticut Valley line two days later, but it wasn't until August 24th that CVRR management declared the railroad officially open. Another ceremonial train, this one with twelve cars full of dignitaries and celebrants, made the trip from

Hartford to Saybrook Point. At many of the towns along the way the special was met by honor guards, drum corps, and crowds of townspeople as the lower valley hailed the arrival of the latest in transportation technology. As it began full-scale operation, the Connecticut Valley Railroad owned four locomotives, all 4-4-0 types built by the Rogers Locomotive Works of Paterson, New Jersey, as well as three baggage cars, six passenger cars, forty gravel cars, and seventy merchandise cars. Initial schedules called for four passenger trains and one mixed train each way daily except Sunday, with fifteen stops along the way.

There would be one more short extension of the railroad. In July 1872 an additional half-mile of track, mostly on trestlework, took trains beyond Saybrook Point to Fenwick at the edge of Long Island Sound. By this time the Saybrook area was fast becoming a popular summer resort. Fenwick Hall was a large resort hotel that had opened in 1871 to cater to the vacation trade, and it was a source of business that prompted the rail extension. The Hartford Yacht Club had established its summer headquarters at Fenwick, and a number of wealthy people from as far away as New York chose the village as the site of their vacation homes. Much of the CVRR's summer passenger business was made up of beachgoers, including trainloads of Hartford residents who were conveyed to the shore aboard special excursions. The CVRR also provided connecting service between Saybrook Junction (today's Old Saybrook station) and Fenwick for Bostonians and New Yorkers who arrived there on the elegant limiteds of the New York, New Haven & Hartford.

Many early railroads got into financial trouble, and the Connecticut Valley was no exception. In an effort to expand north of Hartford, the CVRR leased the Connecticut Central and the Springfield & New London railroads, which gave it a circuitous line from East Hartford to Springfield via Hazardville that apparently drained more money in lease payments that it contributed in money to the company's treasury. At the same time, President Walkeley's insurance company was facing hard times, limiting his ability to bail out the railroad. In 1876 the Connecticut Valley Railroad defaulted on its second mortgage bonds and was placed in receivership.

A new company called the Hartford & Connecticut Valley Railroad took over the property on July 1, 1880. At the time the New Haven Railroad was pursuing a policy of buying up everything that moved in New England, and the H&CV's owners saw the opportunity to sell their backwoods line to the NH at a handsome profit. A few suggestions spread by H&CV management that they were considering further expansion north of Hartford did the trick, and in 1882 the New Haven bought control. Ten years later, in 1892, the H&CV was formally merged into the New Haven system.

The NH put money into the Valley Line, providing modern equipment and better track. At the same time, it

Connecticut Valley Railroad

On and after June 9th, 1873,

Trains Leave,	Passenger Train.	Passenger Train.	Ft. and Pass. Train.	Passenger Train.	Passenger Train.
	A. M.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.
Hartford Junc.	7.05	10.00	12.45	4.05	6.15
Hart'd State St.	7.20	10.15	12.55	4.15	6.26
Wethersfield, .	7.31	10.27	1.10	4.26	6.37
S. Wethersfield,	7.36	10.32	1.18		6.42
Rocky Hill, . . .	7.42	10.37	1.30	4.37	6.50
No. Cromwell,	7.52	10.46	1.42		7.00
Cromwell, . . .	7.56	10.50	2.00	4.50	7.05
Middletown, . .	8.10	11.00	2.20	5.00	7.20
Maromas, ...	8.25	11.14	2.40	5.15	7.40
Higganum, . . .	8.39	11.24	2.57	5.25	7.52
Walkley Hill, .	8.42	11.30	3.07	5.30	7.58
Haddam, ...	8.45	11.33	3.18	5.34	8.02
Arnold's, ...	8.48	11.36	3.26	5.37	8.06
Goodspeed's, .	8.54	11.42	3.40	5.43	8.12
Chester, ...	9.03	11.51	3 55	5.52	8.24
South Chester,	9.05	11.53	4.02	5.54	8.27
Deep River, . .	9.08	11.56	4.10	5.57	8.30
Essex, ...	9.17	12.05	4.25	6.05	8.42
Saybrook Junc.	9.26	12.25	4.50	6.16	8.54
Saybrook Pt., .	9.35	12.33	5.00	6.23	9.05
Ar. Fenwick, .	9.40	12.38		6.28	9.10

Connecticut Valley Railroad

On and after June 9th, 1873,

Trains Leave,	Passenger Train.	Ft. and Pass. Train.	Passenger Train.	Passenger Train.	Passenger Train.	Passenger Train.
	A. M.	A. M.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.	P. M.
Fenwick, ...			7.38	12.05	3.20	7.00
Saybrook Pt., .		5.00	7.45	12.10	3.25	7.15
Saybrook Junc.		5.20	7.55	12.25	3.40	7.25
Essex, ...		5.40	8.04	12.35	3.50	7.35
Deep River, . .		5.55	8.12	12.44	3.59	7.44
South Chester,		6.00		12.47	4.02	7.47
Chester, ...		6.06	8.15	12.50	4.05	7 50
Goodspeed s, .		6.22	8.23	12.59	4.14	8.00
Arnold's, ...		6.34		1.05	4.20	8.06
Haddam, ...		6.40		1.08	4.22	8.08
Walkley Hill, .		6.48	8.35	1.12	4.26	8.11
Higganum, . . .		6.56	8.39	1.16	4.30	8.15
Maromas, ...		7.10		1.26	4.40	8.25
Middletown, . .		7.35	8.58	1.44	5.00	8.45
Cromwell, . . .		7.56		1 54	5.10	8.55
No. Cromwell,		8.02		2.00	5.15	9.00
Rocky Hill, . .	6.20	8.14		2.10	5.25	9.10
S. Wethersfield,	6.28	8.23		2.15	5.30	9.15
Wethersfield, .	6.35	8.33		2.21	5 35	9.20
Htfd., State St.	6 45	8.45	9.30	2.32	5.46	9.30
Ar. Htfd. Junc.			9.37	2.42	5.56	9.40
Ar. Springfield,			10.41			10.51

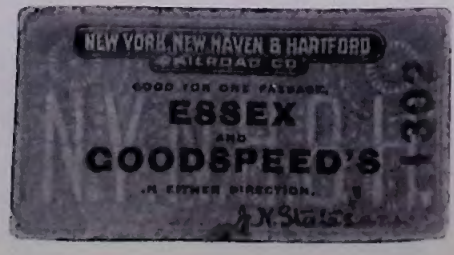
In the top photo, a NYNH&H trainman and his friend posed on a baggage cart at Middletown Union Station around the turn of the century. At this point the Valley Line, on whose tracks the coach is standing, crossed the New Haven-Willimantic "Air Line" route. *(James Russel "Doc" Ward collection)* **In the lower photo, a natty group gathered at the Essex passenger station sometime prior to 1907. This building stood just north of the freight house that serves as today's VRR depot.** *(Bill Spencer collection)* **At right is a NYNH&H ticket over the route of Valley Railroad trains.** *(CVRM collection)*

became clear that the railroad from Hartford to Old Saybrook was never destined to be more than a country branchline. Then as now there was no heavy industry in the lower valley towns, so freight business was limited to deliveries of supplies and merchandise to the small communities and factories along the way. Similarly, the line was not much of a through passenger route. Acquisition of the H&CV permitted the NH to run through trains between New London and Hartford via Old Saybrook, connecting Connecticut's eastern shore towns with the state capitol, but in general passenger business was limited to that generated by local towns. A 1905 passenger schedule showed five trains each way through Essex, all of them locals carrying neither diners nor parlor cars.

As long as automobiles were rare and highways poor, the Valley line was assured of traffic. But once Americans took to the roads, the Valley line, like country branchlines throughout New England, saw its business begin to disappear. Service over the trestle from Saybrook Point to Fenwick ended in 1915, followed by the demise of the short stub to Saybrook Point some years later. The 1920's saw extensive cutbacks in branchline passenger service throughout the New Haven system. The last regular passenger service on the Valley Line was a Middletown-Hartford commuter train that was replaced by a bus in 1933.

Just as branchline passenger traffic was lost to the highways in the years after World War I, so branchline freight was lost to the trucks in the years after World War II. By the late 1950's the Hartford-Old Saybrook line saw only weekday local freight service, and the speed limit on the entire route was down to 30mph. The New Haven fell into bankruptcy in 1961, and spent as little money as possible on branchline maintenance. Weeds grew high between the rails, and south of Middletown those weeds were disturbed only twice a week by the passage of the local freight. Finally, the cash-starved New Haven requested permission to abandon the Valley Railroad's future track from the junction at Old Saybrook to a point called Laurel, just below Middletown. Because the freight business had dropped to almost nothing, that permission was granted. In March 1968 the New Haven ran its last train through Essex, Deep River, and Chester.

If the Valley Line had been destined to share the fate of most abandoned branches, that would have been the end of things. A scrap train would have come to pull the rails, and the empty right-of-way would have become a grassy trail through the woods. Happily, though, this branchline was on the verge of a renaissance.



In 1872 the Connecticut Valley Railroad went to sea by building a long trestle across South Cove from Saybrook Point to Fenwick. The rare photo above shows a 4-4-0 locomotive pulling a baggage car and a pair of coaches over this extension, which was abandoned in 1916. *(Mrs Rockwell Staniford collection)* **Below, at Saybrook Junction the Valley's tracks crossed the New Haven's Shore Line. The station is now called Old Saybrook and is still in use today.** *(CVRM collection)*

On this page are three early action photos of trains along the Valley Line. Above is Connecticut Valley Railroad engine #1, the "Haddam", which was built in 1871 and photographed here when still new. Note the delicate metalwork and the immense oil headlight that were typical of locomotives of the period. *(Charles Munger collection)* **The middle photo shows another 4-4-0 type southbound at the point called Arnolds, just above Goodspeed's, sometime around the turn of the century. By this time locomotives had become utilitarian.** *(Paul Mangini collection)* **In the lower photo, a southbound New Haven local departs Deep River around 1907 in an old postcard view.** *(Louis Bertelli collection)*

These two photos from the late 1940's show typical freight activity on the Valley Line during the last years of New Haven steam. Above, a view from the Middletown-Portland highway bridge shows a short local freight behind a 2-6-0 crossing through the back yards of Middletown, headed south. Housewives in the neighborhood are undoubtably accustomed to having cinders soil their laundry. Below, a rare photo shows another local freight behind a 2-8-2 pausing at Essex to set off or pick up cars. The roof of the station may be spotted beneath the boom of the crane.
(Both photos, Kent Cochrane, T.J. McNamara collection)

VRR DEVELOPMENT, 1969 - 1983

On the Valley Railroad's second day of public operation — August 1, 1971 — engine 103 and its train roll north from Essex. *(Howard Pincus)*

Like many organizations dedicated to the preservation of America's history, today's Valley Railroad Company exists only because of a lot of hard work and no small amount of luck. Steam trains run again through the lower Connecticut Valley thanks to the efforts of a number of determined people who came together at the right time.

In the late 1960's a railroad historical group based in the Hartford area was looking for a permanent home. The Connecticut Valley Railroad Association was a group of volunteer hobbyists who had sponsored several steam excursions on the tracks of the New Haven Railroad. The locomotive used on these trips was a 45-year-old former freight hauler, 2-8-0 type number 97, which had been purchased by railroad enthusiast Stephen D. Bogen from a defunct Alabama shortline, the Birmingham & Southeastern. The New Haven had been willing to let the 97 out on its branch lines from time to time, but the locomotive's sponsors were hoping for a railroad of their own. One proposal centered around the New Haven's soon-to-be-abandoned branch between Canaan and Lakeville in the Berkshire foothills of northwestern Connecticut, but plans for a tourist railroad there failed to materialize. So a group of CVRA volunteers led by F. William Zaiser went branchline-hunting. The ideal line would be scenic, available for sale at a fair price, and located somewhere accessible to tourists. At one point the NH's Collinsville-Farmington line near Hartford seemed to be the candidate, but the group was unable to work out a purchase agreement with the New Haven Railroad, and also ran into opposition from some local residents who feared ill effects from a railroad museum in their neighborhood. After the New Haven went out of business at the end of 1968, its successor Penn Central was unwilling to run excursions. Consequently, the 97 languished in storage at Danbury as the CVRA continued to look for a home.

Meanwhile, other groups were at work in the Old Saybrook and Essex area. Local excursion boat operator Gifford Warner led one; *American Heritage* editor Oliver Jensen, Addison Austin of Norwalk, Stephen Bogen, and F. William Zaiser were deep into another effort to run excursion trains along the abandoned Valley line. They had suceeded in attracting the attention of the state government to their effort. In particular, Connecticut's Agricultural and Natural Resources Commissioner, Joseph Gill, saw in the derelict line an opportunity for the state to gain control of a valuable strip of real estate along an undeveloped stretch of riverbank. State ownership of the railroad land would permit careful control of commercial development in a scenic and unspoiled natural area. Excursion trains would be more welcome than traffic and highways.

In a spirit of cooperation the Hartford group and the Old Saybrook/Essex groups informally got together to work toward their common goal. The Valley Railroad Company

was chartered by the state legislature, and in 1969 and 1970 up to thirty persons invested in stock. Meanwhile, the state had begun negotiating with Penn Central for purchase of the Old Saybrook-Middletown trackage. While this agreement was worked out the Valley group took out a temporary lease from Penn Central on the 4.2 miles of line from Old Saybrook to Essex to give it a place to store a growing collection of equipment. On June 1, 1969 the Valley Railroad turned its first wheel — although those wheels belonged not to a train but to the CVRA's Pontiac inspection car, which gingerly poked its way through the weeds that covered the dormant railroad.

On August 15, 1969, the final purchase agreement between the state and Penn Central was signed, and the Connecticut Park and Forest Department (now part of the Department of Environmental Protection) took title to the 22.67 miles of rusty track from the mainline junction at Old Saybrook to a hamlet called Maromas below the city of Middletown. On June 1, 1970, the Park and Forest Department granted a formal lease to the Valley Railroad Company, authorizing it to operate freight and passenger service over the 22.67 miles of rust.

The main activity at Essex in the summer of 1969 involved moving equipment to the weed-choked yard that would be the Valley Railroad's headquarters. Engine 97 moved down from Danbury, and it was joined at Essex by an assortment of passenger cars and a GE 44-ton diesel switcher. More preserved equipment arrived during the winter of 1970-71, when the collection of the Empire State Railway Museum, formerly housed at Middletown, NY, also moved to town in search of a permanent home. This included 2-6-2 locomotive 103, which would be the VRR's first operating steam engine.

There was a tremendous amount of work to be done in turning a dead branchline and retired equipment into a healthy operating museum, and during 1970 and the first part of 1971 volunteers from the VRR, CVRA, and ESRM were very busy. The first priority was the track, which had been sorely neglected in the last years of the New Haven. In order to make the line safe for regular passenger trains, crews had to cut brush overgrowth, replace over 1200 deteriorated crossties, and realign crooked rails. The old NH freight house at Essex had to be rebuilt into a passenger station, with new office facilities, a gift shop snack bar, rest rooms, and a gravel platform. Engine 103 had to be cleaned up and checked out, and passenger cars had to be made ready for visitors. Thousands of volunteer man-hours were spent on the restoration work.

As the summer of 1971 began, the work picked up pace, as the Valley's crews aimed towards a special deadline. July 29th would mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the first train over the ancestral Connecticut Valley Railroad, and the new operators had decided that it would be a singularly appropriate date for the revitalized Valley's first run. Thanks to one hectic last night of work by volunteers who had spent the final hours on last-minute painting and other details, the morning of July 29, 1971 found the Valley Railroad still bolting seats in place as the first train came up to the platform, with engine 103, former Chicago & North Western baggage/coach 409, a former Lehigh & New England gondola fitted with seats to serve as an open-air observation car, and ex-Jersey Central coach 1101.

There was a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Essex depot, with VRR President Oliver Jensen representing the company and Lieutenant Governot T. Clark Hull representing the administration in Hartford that had made preservation of the line possible. With whistle blowing and bell ringing, the 103 took the Valley Railroad's first train of invited guests and tired but happy volunteers north to Deep River.

Regular weekend passenger service began two days later, and since that beginning in July 1971 the Valley Railroad has enjoyed a steadily growing patronage. This has been matched by constant improvements in the trackage and other facilities, and additions to the roster of restored, operational equipment.

The VRR's second season in 1972 saw train operation expand from weekends-only to daily during the summer months. Since seven-day-a-week work was beyond the limit that could be expected from volunteers, the railroad began using paid weekday crews on the trains and in the

The condition of most of the Valley's right-of-way before restoration work began is exemplified by this photo just north of Essex in the spring of 1969. Yes, there are rails under that jungle. For a view of the same location today, see page 1. *(CVRM collection)*

ticket office and gift shop. And in an effort to broaden the appeal of the Valley Railroad beyond the train ride itself, the company made arrangements for connecting boat service out of Deep River to places like Haddam or the lower river. Thus the visitor could experience two classic modes of transportation—steam train and riverboat—that had played an essential part in the development of the lower Connecticut Valley, and indeed, America.

The U.S. Army also came to the VRR in 1972, as the railroad was selected as a training site for the 729th Transportation Battalion of the Army Reserves. In exchange for a place to conduct training exercises (at times when passenger service was not running), the reservists did a lot of welcome track repair work. The army continues to assist the Valley Railroad today, as a company called the U.S. Army Transportation Railway Services Unit trains regularly on the property, practicing both operation and maintenance. Essex is thus the home of a pair of Army diesels that are used by the reservists in their work.

Ridership in 1972 more than doubled that of 1971, and as more restored coaches were added to the VRR's train to accommodate business it became clear that a larger locomotive would be needed. Engine 103 had been designed for light logging duty, and was limited to pulling just four passenger cars. Thus, the winter of 1972-73 was spent on preparing the 97 for a return to service. For the 1973 season the 97 became the VRR's regular locomotive, with 103 as a backup. Engine 97 is able to handle an eight-car train comfortably, which is fine for the Valley's current needs.

Christmas season trains first ran on the Valley in 1973. The steam locomotive, a dramatic machine in any weather, is even more so in the cold as condensation magnifies its visual display of smoke and steam. And while some riders may be too young to notice the steam engine, they certainly notice Santa, who contributes his festive greetings to the VRR's December runs.

In early 1974 the Connecticut Valley Railroad Association, one of the volunteer organizations that had been instrumental in creating the Valley Railroad, reorganized itself as the Connecticut Valley Railroad Museum. As a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization, the CVRM could dedicate itself to the preservation and restoration of railroad equipment at Essex. There continues to be a close and cooperative relationship between the Valley Railroad Company, the operating company, and the CVRM, the volunteer museum.

A new locomotive came to the Valley in 1977 with the purchase of Aberdeen & Rockfish number 40, a 2-8-2 type freight locomotive that had been carefully stored in a North Carolina enginehouse for almost 25 years. After a thorough overhaul in the VRR shop, engine 40 made its debut in June 1978, with the late Governor Ella Grasso to christen her with a bottle of champagne. Like the 97 it is capable of handling an eight-car passenger train, and it has been a regular operating engine at Essex since the 1978 season, alternating chores with the 97. On special occasions the 97 and 40 will be teamed up to run together, creating a spectacular show of sight and sound. The little engine that got it all started, the 103, is now on display in honored retirement at the Essex station.

Before the Valley Railroad took over, the once-busy Essex yard lay abandoned, and the station had been boarded up. The station has now been restored and the field at right has become the VRR's parking lot and equipment storage area. *(CVRM collection)*

In the beginning the Valley's regular run was between Essex and Deep River station. Track restoration has been steady, and during the 1983 season, trains were running into Chester, some 5½ miles from Essex. Plans call for further extension, another four miles to East Haddam (Goodspeed's) in the near future. The remainder of the old Valley Line is in place all the way to Middletown, and although brush grows over the right-of-way there will always be the possibility of further restoration.

A unique sort of extension came in August 1980, when trains began running the four miles from Essex south to Old Saybrook. While the VRR's main focus remains the more scenic trackage north of Essex, the reopening of the Old Saybrook line permitted a direct connection with Amtrak trains from New York and Boston. The Valley Railroad is the only tourist line that offers riders a cross-platform connection with Amtrak, providing visitors with easy rail access. The Old Saybrook passenger service is handled, when required, by GE diesel 0800, which is the usual engine on the Amtrak connection.

Now well into its second decade of operation, the revived Valley Railroad has emerged as one of the country's most successful steam excursion lines. With some 140,000 passengers riding the trains out of Essex each year, the Valley now carries more people than half of Amtrak's national short-haul routes, and that during a six month season. Additionally, most of the Valley's passengers take advantage of the chance to explore the river aboard the boats of the Deep River Navigation Company. The dock at Deep River is the last place in the country where steam trains meet riverboats-a sight once common during the nation's formative years. Thanks to the Valley Railroad, that sight will endure.

Engine 97 pulled a series of excursion trips over the New Haven Railroad between 1966 and 1968. In the photo above, it enters Waterbury in front of an appreciative crowd while en route from Hartford to Derby on May 19, 1968. Below, by July 1970 the 97, a string of coaches, and a GE 44-ton diesel had been moved to storage in the Essex yard. *(Both photos, Tom Nelligan)*

The dilapidated branchline tracks that had been leased from the state had to be put into good condition before the Valley Railroad could begin operations. These photos show the general steps in the track reconstruction done by Valley volunteers in 1970 and 1971. At left, new ties have been set out and await installation under the rails at Deep River station. *(CVRM collection)* **Once rotted ties have been replaced, the tracks must be reballasted. The center photo shows how ballast is distributed from a side-dump car pulled by the diesel.** *(Howard Pincus)* **Finally, ties and rails must be jacked up and the ballast tamped underneath to insure an even alignment.**
(Howard Pincus)

The Valley Railroad Company had its official opening on July 29, 1971, the one-hundredth anniversary of the first train over its route. Flag-bedecked engine 103 and a three-car train made up the ceremonial first run from Essex to Deep River that culminated years of work by scores of volunteers. At right, VRR President Oliver Jensen greeted Conductor John Sheldon as the inaugural train prepared to depart Essex. Below, the first train attracted a crowd at Deep River, which at that time was the end of the operating line. The forested area at left has since been cleared to accommodate the new dock.
(Both photos, Andrew Pavlucik)

Little engine 103 was the Valley Railroad's regular power during the 1971 and 1972 seasons. The photo above shows it crossing the meadow north of Essex with a typical three-car train. But steadily increasing business meant longer trains that would require a heavier locomotive, so engine 97, which had not run since 1968, was overhauled to become the regular locomotive for the 1973 season. Below, on March 5, 1973, the 97 was steamed up for the first time at Essex.
(Both photos, Howard Pincus)

Engine 40 entered service on the Valley Railroad with an official first run on June 17, 1978. In the photo above, engine 40 pulls into Essex station with its first train as the Essex Sailing Masters fife and drum corps render an appropriate salute. *(T. Dean Caple)* **At right, flags and banners were again the order of the day on August 1, 1980, as the Valley inaugurated regular passenger runs to Old Saybrook. Engine 97 and two cars made up the first train from the Amtrak connection. Easing of the national "energy crisis" came soon, and business on the Amtrak shuttle dwindled. In 1983 it was offered only by advance request from groups.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY LINE

Engine 97 takes a long winter train north from Essex on a cold December 1980 afternoon. *(Tom Nelligan)*

Thanks to the efforts of the Valley Railroad Company, the nostalgic sound of the steam locomotive and the sweet vapors of soft coal smoke can be found again for six months of each year in the lower Connecticut Valley. The persistent work of the early years has made the Valley Railroad one of the nation's busiest and most authentic steam tourist railroads.

The Valley Railroad's operating season runs from May through October, with trains running daily during the summer months and daily except Mondays and Fridays during the months of May, September, and October. Exact schedules may be obtained by telephoning (203) 767-0103. Additionally, winter season holiday trains run on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays during the Christmas period.

The VRR's headquarters town of Essex is located along Connecticut Route 9, four miles north of the Connecticut Turnpike, Interstate 95. Most visitors arrive at Essex by auto or by chartered bus, but by special arrangement the Valley Railroad's shuttle train provides an across-the-platform connection with Amtrak at Old Saybrook. Thus, the steam trains of the Connecticut Valley Line may be reached by rail from anywhere along Amtrak's Northeast Corridor route.

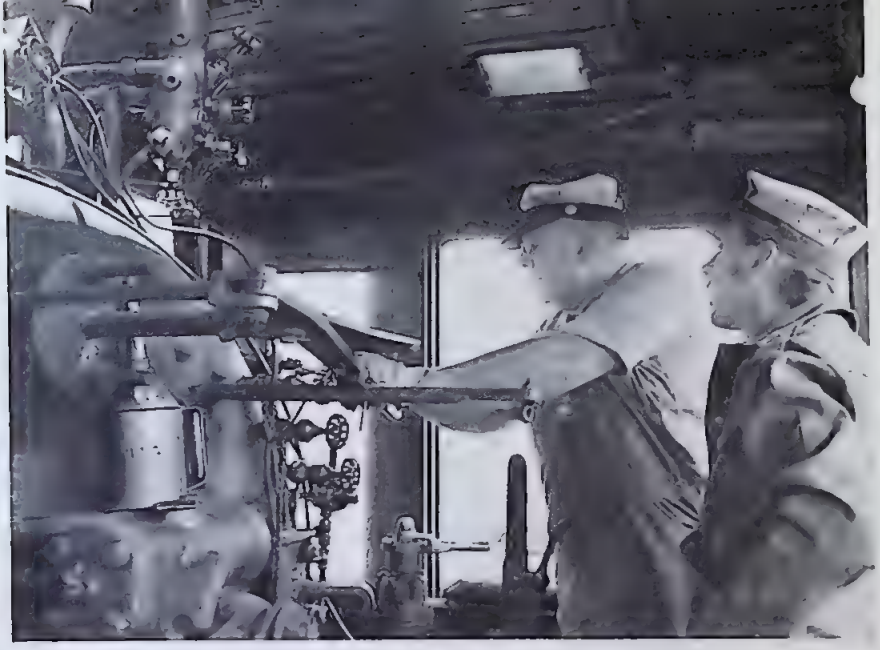
Up to six trains a day depart Essex for the north end of the line. As the 1983 season began, trains ran to a point called Castleview in the town of Chester, but the terminus was scheduled to move four miles beyond to East Haddam (Goodspeed's) as the restoration of trackage continued. The line passes through a surprising diversity of scenery, with the views from the coaches ranging from dense woods to grassy meadows, from rock cuts to riverside panoramas. Upon reaching the present (1983) north end of the line the trains pause a few moments, and then back up the mile or so to Deep River station, where a passing siding permits the locomotive to run around the train and position itself for the return journey. At Deep River too is the wharf where passengers may board the connecting riverboats of the Deep River Navigation Company, that afford a look at the valley from another mode of traditional transportation.

Trains generally consist of 2-8-0 type locomotive 97 or 2-8-2 type 40 pulling up to eight passenger cars. Most of the cars are restored suburban coaches built more than fifty years ago to carry commuters in northern New Jersey. With their open windows and wicker seats they are typical of the day coaches that ran on branchlines such as the Valley Railroad in the 1920's. For payment of a small extra fare visitors may also ride in the parlor car *Wallingford,* whose deep plush seats, elegant woodwork, and ornate lamps preserve the spirit of the luxury rail travel provided for decades by the Pullman Company.

The photos on the following pages show some of the more important aspects of the Valley Railroad's operation as it goes about its mission of recreating history today.

The Valley Railroad's regular locomotives, 2-8-0 type number 97 and 2-8-2 number 40, both came to New England from the south. The 97 came from Alabama, while the 40 spent most of its working life in North Carolina. Both are now well settled into their new careers hauling passengers in Connecticut. Above, the 97 and its northbound train approach the Route 9 bridge between Essex and Deep River. *(Tom Kelcec)* **Below, engine 40 and its train are northbound at Old Deep River Road.** *(John E. Helbok)*

Above, a northbound train behind engine 97 crosses the Falls River bridge north of Essex. The serious floods that hit the lower Connecticut Valley in June, 1982 washed out this bridge as well as much adjoining track, requiring three months of emergency work (including a new bridge abutment) before service could be restored to the VRR mainline. *(John E. Helbok)* **At left, a train pauses at Deep River to permit the 97 to run around the cars for the trip back to Essex.** *(Jim Shaughnessy)*



Running a steam locomotive is hard, hot, dirty work — unless, of course, it is a labor of love. The Valley Railroad's engine crews are professionals at an ancient skill that has been almost completely forgotten in this internal-combustion age. Unlike the crews who run today's diesels on other railroads, the VRR's engineers and firemen work in an environment of cast-iron valves, hissing steam, and a blazing firebox. The cab of a steam locomotive is the best place to feel the elemental power of these grand machines. *(Top photo: Michael J. Robinson collection, middle photo: Howard Pincus. bottom photo: Scott Hartley)*

Modern railroads regularly run two or more diesel locomotives on the head end of their trains, with all of the locomotives electronically controlled by a single engineer. In steam days, though, it was much less common to see multiple locomotives on a train, largely because each engine required a separate crew that had to coordinate its actions with the others. But when steam was "doubleheaded" on heavy trains, the resulting show of sight and sound was awesome. On special occasions the Valley Railroad fires up both of its engines to recreate those moments. Above, engines 97 and 40 prepare to lead a Railfan's Day doubleheader out of Essex in October 1980. *(Tom Nelligan)* **Below, in September 1978 the duo led another special through Deep River.** *(Jim Shaughnessy)*

Since August 1980 the Valley Railroad has provided scheduled connecting service with Amtrak at Old Saybrook, the only place in the country where an excursion railroad provides a handy transfer to intercity trains. GE diesel 0800 is the usual locomotive on the Old Saybrook shuttle, but when large groups are due steam returns to the station formerly known as Saybrook Junction. The photos on this page show VRR trains at Old Saybrook as an eastbound Amtrak corridor train arrives, as passengers walk to a diesel shuttle behind 0800, and as 97 heads north on a misty morning.
(Three photos, Jim Shaughnessy)

Members of a unique military reserve unit, the US Army Transportation Railway Services Unit, practice both track construction and train operation — using their own diesel locomotives — on the Valley Railroad during the off season. The training these reservists receive during their weekend drills on the VRR would be of great importance if they were ever called to active duty. The two upper photos on this page show members of the reserve company building a siding just north of Old Saybrook. *(Richard Edling photos, Max R. Miller collection)* **Another type of special operation on the Valley Railroad is the annual Stockholder's Special, which give the company's owners a chance to view the property each spring. Below, the March 1982 Stockholder's Special behind diesel 0800 pauses at Deep River station.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

For many youngsters, a trip on the Valley Railroad represents their first train ride, an experience which in this automobile-dominated age can come much later in life than it used to. In an ongoing effort to tell the story of America's railroads to a new generation, the Valley each year hosts a large number of school charter trips, as well as special visits by Boy Scouts and other groups. And of course at Christmas the ride is made especially memorable for the young — and for not a few adults as well — by the visits of Santa to the VRR's coaches. *(Clifford Scofield)* **At right, a little girl meets her first steam locomotive at Essex.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

The passenger cars operated by the Valley Railroad are a diverse collection of restored antiques, typical of those that made up a passenger train of the 1920's. One of the oldest cars in regular use is baggage/coach combine 409, built in 1915 by American Car & Foundry for the Chicago & North Western. In the photo above it is the first car in the train crossing the Essex meadow. *(John E. Helbok)* **Pullman parlor car** *Wallingford* **— the Valley's First Class accomodation — was built in 1927 and worked on the New Haven RR. Below it leads a train departing Old Saybrook.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

Valley Railroad coaches are of two ancestries. The 500-series cars such as number 502, top photo, were built by Pullman in 1914 and 1915 for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad. The 1100-series cars such as 1101, above, were built by Harlan & Hollingsworth in 1924 and 1925 for the Central Railroad of New Jersey. Both types of cars carried New Jersey commuters from the suburbs to the Hudson River ferry terminals until replaced by more modern equipment in the 1960's.
(Two photos, Tom Nelligan)

Not as romantic but just as essential is the VRR's antique crane, right, which assists in a variety of repair and maintenance functions. It was built in 1927 by the American Hoist & Derrick Company and used by American Creosoting at Montowese, CT. *(John E. Helbok photo, Max R. Miller collection)*

It takes a great amount of careful work to keep sixty-year-old steam locomotives in prime condition. The steam locomotive was always a machine that required a lot of attention, and the task is even more difficult in the 1980's because experienced steam locomotive mechanics are hard to find. There are also no easy sources for spare parts, and replacement parts must often be fabricated from scratch. The Valley Railroad's engines benefit from the presence of a fully-equipped locomotive shop staffed by a well-trained crew led by Chief Mechanical Officer Barry Anderson. From routine inspections to periodic heavy overhauls, the Valley shop is equal to the task. These photos were taken in March 1978 when engine 97 was in for a complete rebuilding. *(Both photos, Jim Shaughnessy)*

Car restoration work is an ongoing activity at the Valley Railroad. In the early years work had to be done outdoors, but now a fully equipped shop building protects both cars and workers from the weather. At upper left, the winter maintenance crew attends to a variety of tasks. *(Michael J. Robinson)* **At upper right, a worker restores a roof.** *(Michael J. Robinson)* **Below, car 1101 gets new windows.** *(Howard Pincus)*

Just as the Valley Railroad has become bigger and better over the years, so have the dock facilities at Deep River where the connection is made to the popular riverboats. The upper photo shows the Deep River area in 1972, when passengers had to walk down an unimproved hillside to a rather rudimentary dock. *(Clifford Scofield).* **Below is today's Deep River Landing, a much more convenient facility for the train/boat interchange.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

About ninety per cent of the Valley Railroad's passengers also ride the connecting river excursions run by the Deep River Navigation Company. The vessels such as the *Dolly Madison* provide an hour-long ride through an unspoiled and scenic section of the Connecticut Valley, recalling the times when riverboats were an important form of transportation in central Connecticut. *(Both photos, Tom Nelligan)*

ELSEWHERE IN THE VALLEY

The Goodspeed Opera House and the spidery highway drawbridge—opened in 1913—dominate the view from the Haddam town dock. *(Tom Nelligan)*

Like the rest of New England, the lower Connecticut Valley has a rich and interesting history. But unlike much of the rest of the region, the lower Valley has managed to preserve a great deal of its heritage unspoiled. Because heavy industry bypassed the area due to the relative lack of water power, and because no large port city ever grew at the Connecticut's mouth due to its shifting sandbars, the towns around Essex remained largely unspoiled while the rest of the state changed. In some places the Connecticut Valley still looks as it did in Colonial times. Thus, visitors to the Valley Railroad can find within the immediate vicinity a number of other examples of living American history.

The village of Essex itself retains a strong eighteenth century flavor. It occupies the site of an Indian village called Pettipaug, and was settled by the English in 1645 as part of Saybrook, once a separate colony but absorbed early into the Connecticut Colony. Essex quickly became a shipbuilding and trading town, and even today its downtown district is oriented towards the river. One early enterprise that is still very much in business is the Griswold Inn, which opened in 1776 and still provides food and lodging. On the river at the foot of Main Street is the Steamboat Dock, built in 1878 and today the home of a museum managed by the Connecticut River Foundation. Across from the Steamboat Dock, the building now housing the Dauntless Club was built in 1766 as the Ship Tavern. A casual walking tour of downtown Essex will uncover many other examples of Colonial and Federal period architecture, as well as a variety of antique shops and art galleries.

Adjacent to the Valley Railroad's station is the manufacturing facility of the Dickinson Witch Hazel Company. For about a century, Dickinson, sometimes called "the Standard Oil of witch hazel," has been distilling that famous folk remedy from a local shrub, which in season is gathered by some area residents as a cash crop.

Although there are bridges across the river at Old Saybrook and East Haddam, the most entertaining way to cross the Connecticut in the lower valley is via the Chester-Hadlyme ferry, a service that has been running each season since 1769. Now operated by the state, the miniature double-ended ferry *Selden III* makes the four-minute crossing dozens of times each day, carrying automobiles and passengers for a modest fare. The short ferry voyage provides a fine opportunity for the visitor to experience a bit of the 350-year tradition of Connecticut River navigation, and it makes for a good view as well.

Gillette Castle, located on the east bank of the river at Hadlyme, is the singularly eccentric residence of actor William Gillette. Best known for his role as Sherlock Holmes in a vast number of turn-of-the-century productions, Gillette fell in love with the Connecticut Valley during a 1913 visit and decided to make it his home. He

selected the southernmost of the "Seven Sisters" hills overlooking the river to build a towering castle of native stone that will always stand as one of the region's odder manifestations of architecture. Following Gillette's death in 1937 his home and grounds were conveyed to the state, which maintains them today as a public park.

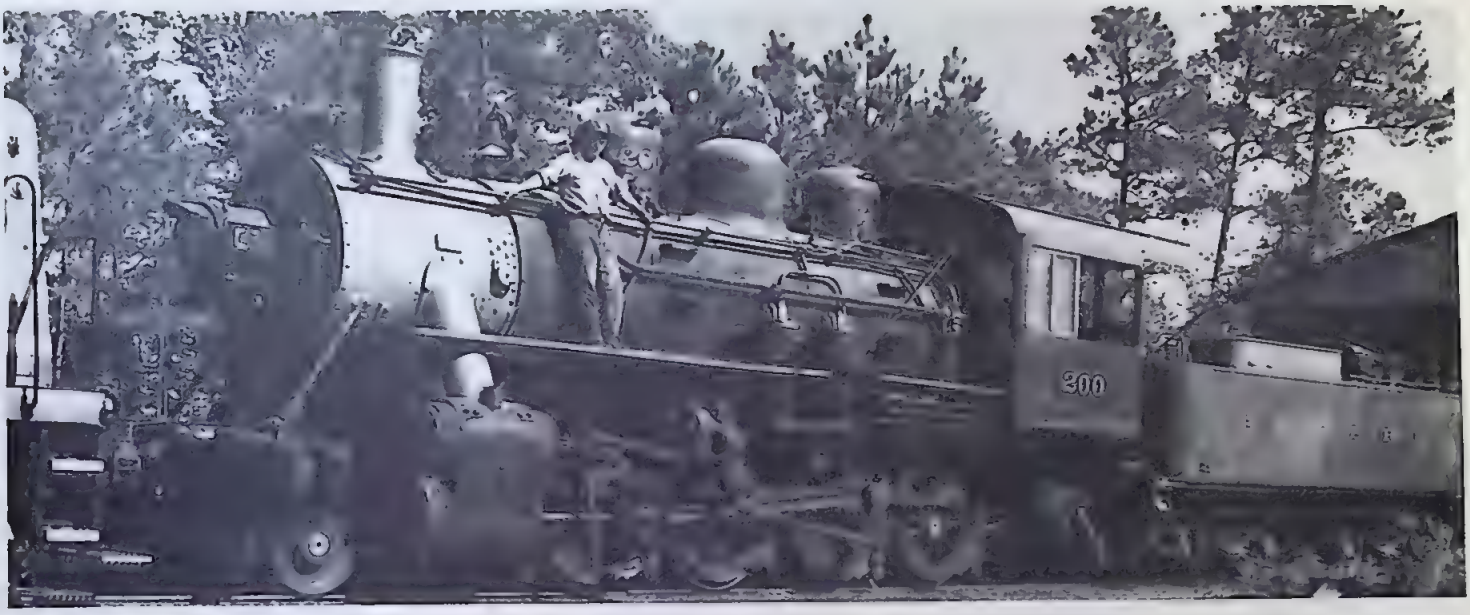
Just upriver, and opposite the station, projected as the Valley Railroad's most northern terminus, is the Goodspeed Opera House of East Haddam. This classic Victorian palace was opened in 1877 by William Goodspeed, a hotelkeeper who decided that an adjacent opera house would draw steamboat passengers and other passersby to his hotel. Goodspeed's hotel is long gone, but his opera house still draws thousands of visitors to the riverside each summer with its highly successful revival productions of classic musicals.

Historically-minded visitors to the Valley Railroad will also be interested in Mystic Seaport, one of the country's finest maritime museums, located approximately 30 miles east of Essex and accessible by car or by Amtrak train from Old Saybrook. Over 175 vessels are on display in a restored nineteenth-century waterfront setting. The city of New London features the United States Coast Guard Academy and the home of playwright Eugene O'Neill, while across the river in Groton is the submarine *USS Croaker*, now on display as a memorial to the Navy's submarine service. The eastern Connecticut coast also features a variety of beaches, with Rocky Neck State Park at Niantic and Ocean Beach at New London among the most popular.

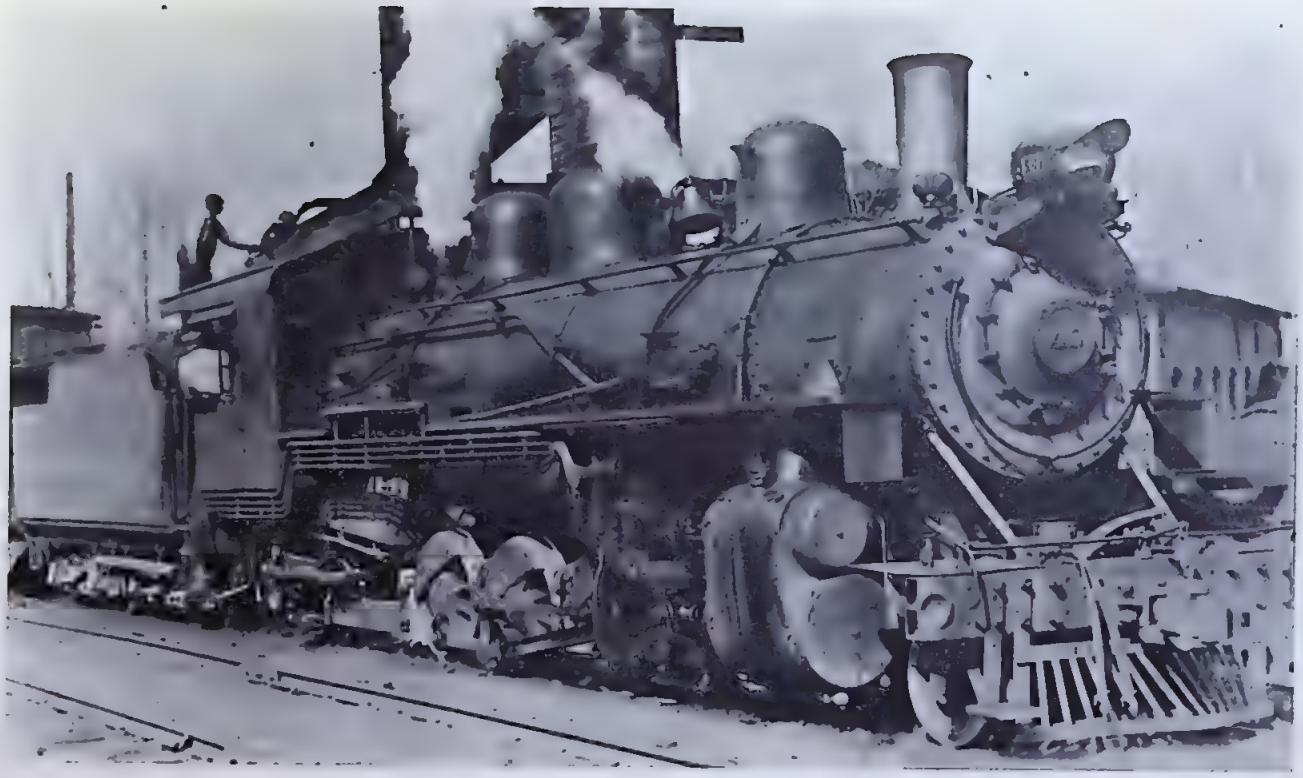
Above, the river ferry *Selden III* sets off on another voyage. *(Tom Nelligan)* **Below, the Steamboat Dock at Essex was built in 1878 and now houses a museum.** *(Dominick J. Ruggiero)*

Engine 103 is a 2-6-2, or "Prairie" type, a light freight locomotive built in November 1925 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works for the Sumter & Choctaw Railway, an Alabama logging line. It was sold in 1962 to the Empire State Railway Museum, for which it ran in tourist service over the Middletown & New Jersey Railroad from 1962 through 1966. It was moved to Essex in 1970 and was the Valley Railroad's regular locomotive during the 1971 and 1972 seasons. It is currently on display at the Essex station. The upper photo is a Baldwin builder's photo of the 103 *(Broadbelt photo, Max R. Miller collection);* **the lower photo shows it at Essex in 1972.** *(John E. Helbok)*

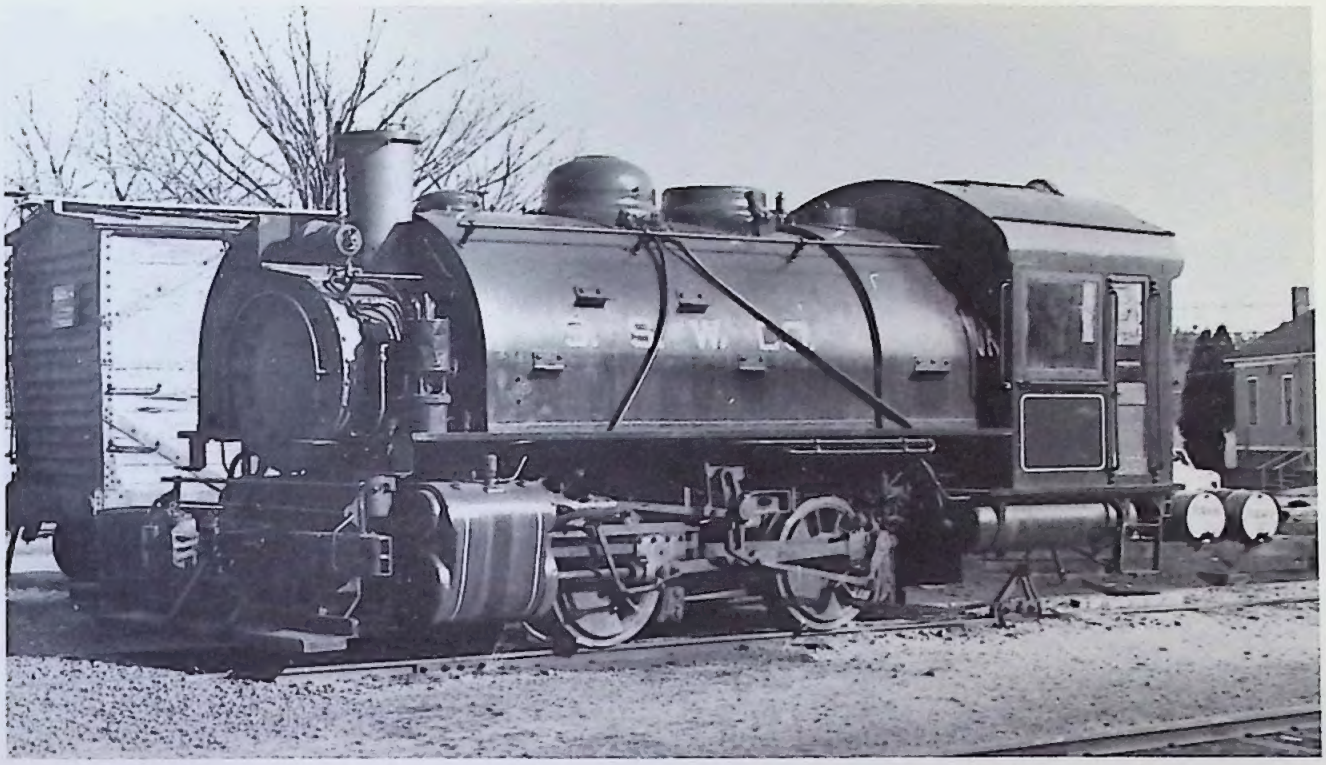
LOCOMOTIVES



Engine 97 is a 2-8-0, or "Consolidation" type, a medium freight locomotive built in November 1923 by the American Locomotive Company's Cooke works. It was built as a stock locomotive for the Cuban sugar trade, but instead wound up being sold in March 1926 to the Birmingham & South Eastern Railroad of Alabama as their number 200. It was purchased in 1964 by Stephen D. Bogen and renumbered 97. It ran in excursion service on the Vermont Railway in 1964 and 1965, and on the New Haven from 1966 through 1968. The 97 was moved to Essex in 1969 and put into service by the VRR in May 1973. It is currently in regular use. During a comprehensive overhaul in 1979 the 97's original tender was replaced by a larger tender of Central Vermont ancestry. The photo above shows the engine as B&SE 200 at Tallassee, Alabama, in April 1961. *(Railway Negative Exchange photo)* **Below is VRR 97 at Essex as it appeared prior to its 1979 rebuilding, with its original tender and centered headlight.** *(Tom Nelligan)*

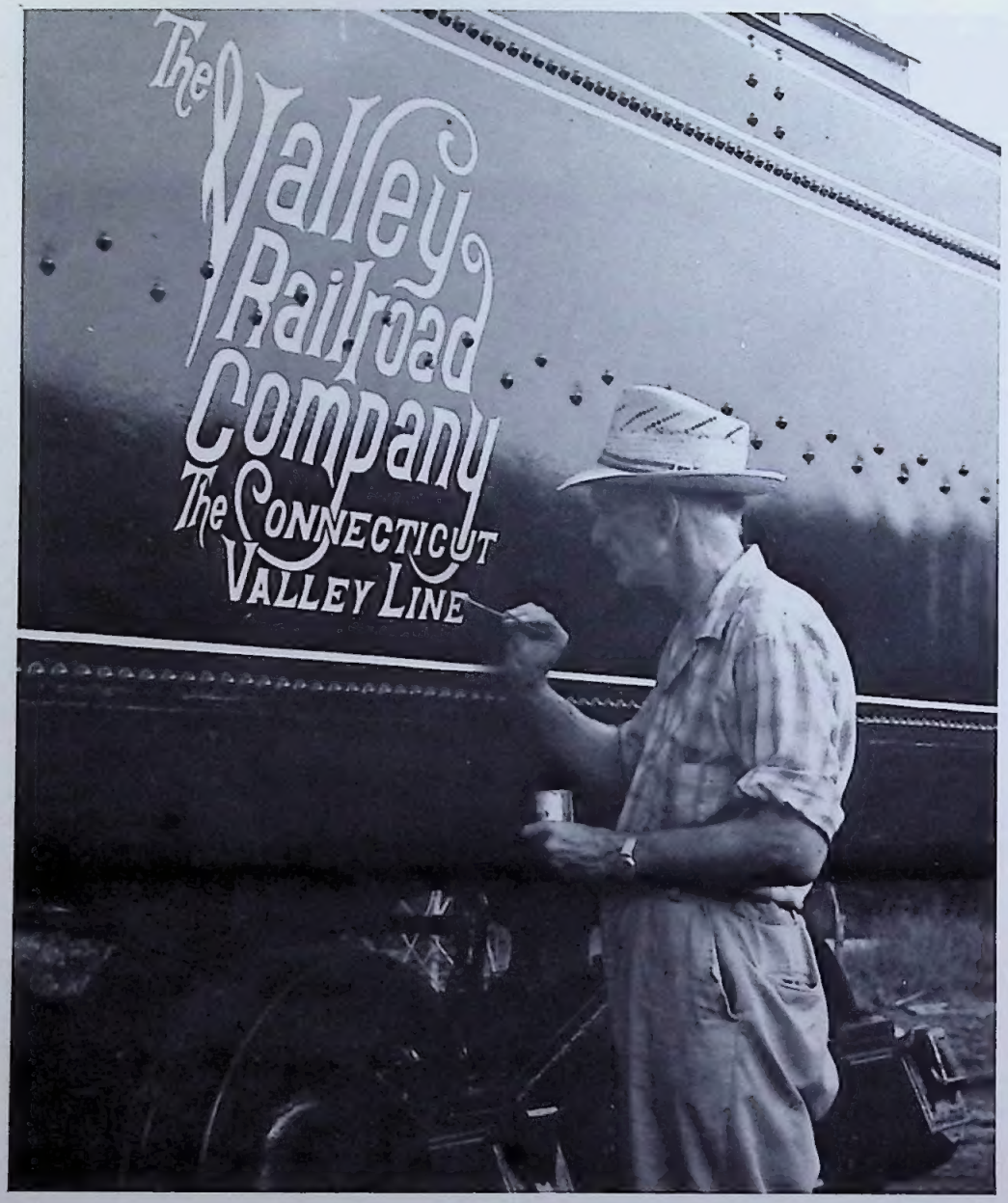


Engine 40 is a 2-8-2, or "Mikado" type, a medium freight locomotive that was built in August 1920 by the American Locomotive Company's Brooks works. It has had a diverse career. It was built for the Portland, Astoria & Pacific Railroad as their number 101, sold in 1922 to the Minarets & Western Railway and transferred to the Southern Pacific in 1932. SP in turn sold it to a dealer in 1935 who resold it to the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad of North Carolina. It worked on the A&R as their number 40 from 1935 to 1952, when it was put into storage. It was purchased by the VRR in 1977 and first ran in June 1978. It is presently in regular service. The photo above shows Aberdeen & Rockfish #40 at Aberdeen, NC, in February 1948. *(Max R. Miller collection)* **Below, thirty years later the same engine poses at Deep River after emerging from the VRR's shops in like-new condition.** *(Jim Shaughnessy)*



Engine 10 is a light industrial switching locomotive, the steam-era counterpart of the diesel 0800. It is an 0-4-OT "saddletanker", so called because it carries its fuel and water supplies in tanks slung over the boiler rather than in a separate tender. It was built in January 1935 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works for a subsidiary, the Standard Steel Works Company (SSW) of Burnham, PA, as their number 10, and worked there from 1935 to 1949. It was then sold to Wickwire Spencer Steel Corp. of Palmer, Mass., where it remained until being moved to Essex in 1970. Engine 10 is privately owned and is currently on display by the Valley Railroad. *(Tom Nelligan photo)*

Engine 0800 is a General Electric 44-ton diesel switcher, one of 349 such light locomotives built by GE in the 1940's and 1950's. The 0800 was built in 1950 for the Long Island Rail Road as their number 400, and worked briefly for the Black River & Western RR in New Jersey before coming to Essex in 1969. It was used in work train service during the rebuilding of the VRR's trackage in 1970 and 1971, and has since been used for a variety of switching duties. Since 1980 it has also been used in passenger service on the Old Saybrook shuttle. Both the 0800's number and its red and black paint scheme commemmorate the New Haven RR's 0800 class of similar 44-Tonners. *(Tom Nelligan photo)*



Lettering painter Fred Bennet at work. *(Howard Pincus)*

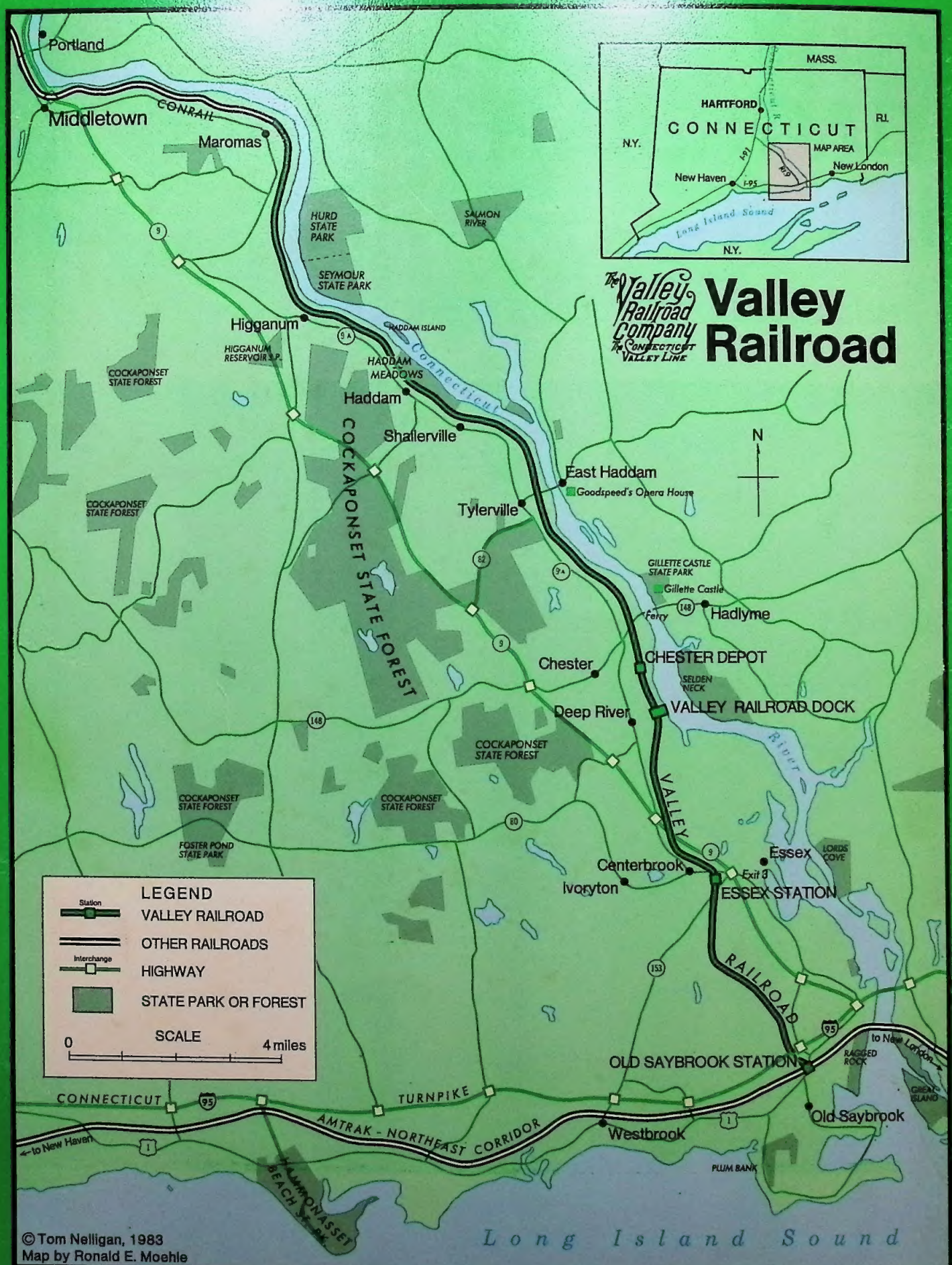
The active preservation of railroad history by the Valley Railroad Company and the Connecticut Valley Railroad Museum is an ongoing work. Volunteers are always welcome for jobs ranging from train crews to track and equipment maintainers. If after your visit to the Valley Railroad you think you might be interested in helping out, please contact the railroad at the address below. Not only will you enjoy yourself, but you will also get the satisfaction of helping to tell the story of an important part of New England's history.

Additionally, the Valley Railroad hopes to publish at some future date a comprehensive history of the railroad line it today operates. Photographs, documents, and reminiscences are being collected for use in this book. If you have any material relating to the New Haven Railroad or its predecessor companies along the Hartford-Middletown-Old Saybrook line, and would like to share it with other interested people, please get in touch with us at either address below. All contributions will be acknowledged.

Valley Railroad Company
Railroad Avenue
Essex, Connecticut 06426
Telephone: (203) 767-0103

Max R. Miller
RR 2, Box 186
Higganum, Connecticut 06441
(203) 345-4019

Engine 40 switches cars at Essex at the end of the day's work. *(Howard Pincus)*



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Map by Ronald E. Moehle